



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By Sgt. Balinda O'Neal

Alaska Army Guard Aviators return from Kuwait

FORT HOOD, TX— Approximately 30 Alaska Army National Guardsmen returned to the United States Dec. 11, following a year-long deployment to Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Guardsmen are the first of 60 from Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment that will arrive in Ft. Hood, TX over the next month to begin out-processing before their return to Alaska.

"I am very proud of Alpha Company and thankful that they will soon be home safely from Kuwait," said Lt. Col. Matthew Schell, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment commander. "I want all the deployed Soldiers to know that I appreciate their dedication and perseverance as they have sacrificed a year away from their families."

In Kuwait, the Guardsmen deployed with the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade to provide aviation support with UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to U.S. and Coalition forces.

"We did a lot of partnership missions with the Kuwaiti nationals. This afforded us the opportunity to bridge that gap between our countries," said Sgt. 1st Class Julie Small, human resources sergeant and door gunner for A Co., 1-207th AVN Reg. "We practiced training and flying with their helicopters."

In addition to building partnerships, the aviators mastered over water work and deck landings. The crews also built their flight time with Night Vision Devices and formation flights.

"I look forward to having them back on our team with the additional experience and sharpened skills," said Schell. "These are skills that can be applied to our domestic operations. Everyone improved their individual skills which will strengthen the Battalion in the years ahead."

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The returning Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers hail from Anchorage, Eagle River, Wasilla, Palmer, Fairbanks, Nome, and Juneau.

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Photo Cutlines:

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Alaska Army Guardsman Chief Warrant Officer Robert Faust, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, takes the final step off the plane as he arrives in the United States Dec. 11, following a year-long deployment to Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Approximately 200 Army National Guard Soldiers returning from Kuwait arrived at Robert Gray Airfield on Fort Hood, TX, to begin out-processing December 11. The Guardsmen are from the 36th Combat Aviation Battalion, Texas; 449th Aviation Support Battalion, Arkansas; and A Co., 1-207th AVN Reg., Alaska. U.S. Army photo by Gloria Harris

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Alaska Army National Guardsman Sgt. Carl Gilmore, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, is greeted by dignitaries on Robert Gray Army Airfield in Fort Hood, TX, after returning from a year long deployment to Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom Dec. 11. U.S. Army photo by Gloria Harris

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Chief Warrant Officer Michael Lewis, right, and Spc. Mikana Halloran both of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, arrive at Robert Gray Army Airfield on Fort Hood, TX, after a year long deployment to Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom Dec. 11. U.S. Army photo by Gloria Harris